

~~E~~

~~601~~

~~A565~~

FLS  
2015  
028369



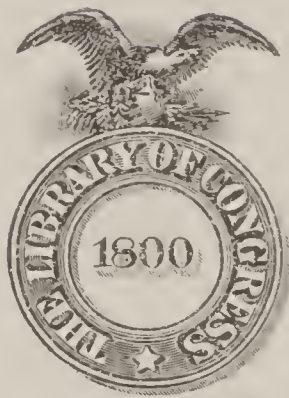
Soldiers' and Sailors' Historical Society  
OF RHODE ISLAND.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES:  
Third Series, No. 18.

A PRIVATE'S REMINISCENCES OF THE  
FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR.

E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS.





Class E 601

Book . A 565









PERSONAL NARRATIVES  
OF EVENTS IN THE  
WAR OF THE REBELLION,  
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE  
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

---

THIRD SERIES — No. 18.

---

PROVIDENCE:  
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.  
1886.

PROVIDENCE PRESS COMPANY, PRINTERS.

In Exchange.

R. I. Hist. Soc.

28 Apr '06





A PRIVATE'S REMINISCENCES  
OF THE  
FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR.

---

BY  
E. <sup>lisha</sup>BENJAMIN ANDREWS,  
[Company C, Fourth Connecticut Infantry, subsequently the  
First Connecticut Heavy Artillery.]

---

PROVIDENCE:  
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.  
1886.

E 601  
.A565

[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

## A PRIVATE'S REMINISCENCES OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR.

---

It is a common remark that we of to-day are too near the last war to write of it with phlegm and candor. This is mostly a piece of cant. No matter in what sense you take the word history, there is much of the history of the war that can be written better now than ever hereafter. There is much of it, in fact, that will never be written at all if it is not soon. Preëminently is this the case regarding those odd details, curious happenings, funny experiences, those indescribable scenes of camp, march and drill, which form the densest and most picturesque spots in every soldier's memory of the war. I refer to the matters with which most of our early letters home from the camp were taken up. They became so antiquated before we got out of service, and other more weighty, more serious, less

comical things came to occupy our attention, that these ludicrous sides of military life have with many passed largely out of remark. Those also who went out as recruits into well-organized regiments became soldiers with fewer of the stumbling and grotesque approaches by which the campaigners of early '61 attained to that degree.

In this aspect of its history, the first is the most interesting year in all the war. Rare were the men who, when the drums first beat to arms, knew what arms meant. My regiment, the Fourth Connecticut [after October, 1861, the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery], taking the oath to the United States on May 22, 1861, was, so far as I have ever learned, the earliest volunteer regiment to be mustered in for three years. We had been already enlisted for some time as three months' men before the call for a three years' contingent came; and so hot was our patriotic zeal, that we instantly subscribed again for the longer term.

The imagination of youth is specially active, and because I was then so young, I may perhaps retain in memory better than some of my older com-

rades, the notions, the expectations, the theories, with which they and I enlisted. One of our fixed ideas was that a single Yankee could whip five rebels with the utmost ease. Some placed the number as high as twelve; but I think that any man in my company venturing incredulity as to our ability easily to vanquish the rebels in the ratio of five of them to one of ourselves, would have been summarily ejected from the company. Like Gideon of old, we wanted no faint hearts in our band.

As part of the same delusion, men used to suggest, not wholly in fun, that our regiment, or at any rate the troops from Connecticut, should take the contract of thrashing the rebels for so many thousand dollars, the job to be completed, inspected and passed upon by competent European commissioners, not later than the end of July, or no charge at all to be made.

Quite as laughable were the pictures we drew to ourselves of the manner in which we were to make the campaign. When I enlisted, and for some days thereafter, I fully expected to carry a trunk with me, and a commodious number of changes of rai-

ment; on finding which impossible, I felt as downcast as did the hundred days' man whom I met at Bermuda Hundred in '64, who, being just out from Ohio, hadn't had any pie or any butter for his bread since leaving Fortress Monroe. How, too, we loaded ourselves with pistols, bowie-knives, and a whole lot of other furniture that was, we thought, going to be handy when we got down South. One might be called upon to clinch with a rebel. The rebel would, of course, be the under dog, but might not let you up, you know. How convenient to reach round behind you, draw your bowie-knife and coax him to relax his grip! One very devout soldier carried his family bible. The knapsack that tugged at my wretched shoulders when we left Hartford for the front on June tenth, of '61, would have made a camel pant, containing wares enough to have stocked a country store. This lugging about of Egyptian pyramids upon our backs we soon abandoned, as we did the bowie-knives and pistols. One man in our company, however, never marched with less than sixty or seventy pounds in his knapsack, to the end of the war. His calling before had been that of a



pack-pedlar, and he said he experienced a certain difficulty in not falling forward on his face, unless he had about the old load strapped behind.

Alas, the knapsack was but one among our burdens that dreadful day on which we set forth for the war. Such uniforms as we writhed under ! I perspire at thought of them now, after the lapse of a quarter of a century. As the United States Government was unable to provide us in this respect, the excellent Governor Buckingham, of Connecticut, had assumed to do it. He, good man, had rigged us out with suits of the thickest sort of gray woolen, made, one would have thought, especially for midwinter wear in Greenland. There were heavy gray felt hats to match. We had no blouses. The coats were short, without skirts ; the pants of so generous girth that if any hero, beating perchance a hasty retreat, should have the misfortune to lose his knapsack, he might not be destitute of a good place to bestow his blanket. Some of the trousers were three inches too long ; some nearly as much too short. The average coat, too, had a considerable surplus of circumference. Vests there were none ;

for which lack, coarse, heavy, gray flannel shirts, with the redundant longitude of the trousers, were expected to make amends.

We had cartridge-boxes, haversacks, canteens and old-fashioned Springfield muskets. Not being graduates of a Turveydrop Academy, we had little taste in arranging this gear when we came to don it. Here would be a tall man with the straps for those utensils so short as to bring his canteen, haversack and cartridge-box well up under his arms, the first two on one side, the cartridge-box on the other; yonder a little five-footer would go "hepp," "hepp," "hepp," along, with those same indispensable appurtenances flopping half way to his heels. Some had their overcoats strapped neatly and compactly plumb on the top of their knapsacks; others fastened them on in so dowdy a way as to suggest that they meant the very frightfulness of their appearance to drive back the foe, on the principle which Sidney Smith must refer to when he mentions a man the mere look of whose face was a breach of the peace, he was so homely.

And then what inimitable marching! My company



was about equally divided at first between the men who could keep no time at all, those who could keep some time but not much, and those who could keep a good deal of time if each were permitted to do it in his own way. In a word, it took a long while for us to become strong in rhythm. Our first marked improvement appeared at the moment when we mastered the trick of bringing down our *left* feet all together, responding to the "hepp," "hepp," "hepp," of the drill-master, letting the right feet take care of themselves. When we could do that, we felt that war was indeed a fine art and we fine artists. Ah, we found there were perfections not yet attained! The next stage of advance was when the right feet all struck the earth together, or at any rate a great majority of them, but not midway of the interval between two percussions with the left. Beyond this none but the men of genius went, till some time after Bull Run; and one at least of those my valorous comrades never could, to the last, learn any other than the go-as-you-please step. The sublimity of this case lay in the fact that the man did not pretend to march accurately. Another fellow

among us almost never had the step, but always, if corrected, swore—Athanasius against the world—that he and he alone had it. Marching thus out of time once behind me, and treading on my heels each pace, he threatened in language I will not repeat, to report me to the captain for not keeping step. I called his attention to the obvious fact that the great majority had the same step as I. He said he didn't give a damn for majorities—and he was right.

But to go back and dwell on those uniforms, and to tell you how in those days we had to dwell *in* those uniforms! As we wore them from Hartford, how new they looked! Alas, too soon they began to assume a different face! Seven days each week we had to wear them; often, on guard for instance, at night as well. They grew dirty. That was not the worst. Repairs became necessary, and facilities for effective repairs there were none. One by one those noble garments gave way. No new ones were to be had. A hat being lost, one could indeed buy a cheap Zouave chapeau from the sutler if one had money. Let a coat wear out, its owner had no resource but to go in shirt-sleeves by day, in his over-

coat by night. At Chambersburg, at Hagerstown and Williamsport, even at Frederick, our uniforms remained fairly presentable; but by the time we reached Darnestown, Maryland, in August or September of '61, we were a sight to behold. Could we have been manifested to the rebel army at that time, I am sure that Bull Run would have been avenged and that Beauregard and his braves would have fallen back in dismay.

Let me attempt to describe to you what, by way of euphemism and with extraordinary and dangerous strain upon language, we called our "*dress parade*" at this period. One man in ten was barefoot. Some were bareheaded. Many wore red skull-caps, in such queer contrast with the majority, who still retained, limp, faded and dirty, the majestic old sombreros we had received from Governor Buckingham. Not a few in the regiment had become veritable *sans culottes*, and must needs march to the parade-ground in their drawers. Hardly a uniform in the entire line was whole or clean.

How vividly I remember a conversation that I overheard one evening, at a well whither I had gone,

some distance from our own camp, to replenish my canteen for a night of guard duty! It was at the close of a day on which the entire Division under General Banks had been on review, and my regiment had been, if I do say it, the observed of all observers. The speaker was a Pennsylvanian. "I say, Bill," said he to his companion, "did yer see that rigiment in gray, half on 'em bareheaded or barefooted and kinder lookin' zef they'd ben on a forced march like?" "'Deed, did I," said the other; "them uz a sorry lookin' set, durned if they want." "They's the fellers wot kin fight tho," rejoined the first speaker. "You bet," said the second; "they done ben to Bull Run, them fellers, 'n that's wot ails ther rig."

This complimentary critic was in error. We had not seen Bull Run. During that battle we were back under Patterson at Martinsburg and Williamsport. Yet when I think of the state of our clothing at this time, I do not wonder that the Pennsylvanian mistook us for veteran campaigners. Not worse clad were the wretches who followed Napoleon back from Borodino and Moscow. I have not told you the

worst about our experience with that clothing. Nor can I. Suffice it to remark that when, a month later, we got new apparel, every soldier, as he cast each of his old rags away forever, could have said, in the language often used to puff a new business enterprise, only with far more truth, "there's millions in it."

Striking memories come back to me touching the commissary's department and its administration that summer of the opening war. We got our first government rations at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The beef barrels and bread boxes were marked "B. C."; and, in the well-known language of Bret Harte, "I would not deny in respect to the same what that name might imply." Certainly that food could not have been put up since the Mexican war. The beef, if such it was, consisted of so many parcels and packs of leather shoe-strings. The hard-bread it required hammers, axes and stones to break. Soaking it over night in water merely altered the form of the difficulty, giving the material the consistency of sole-leather. The only mode of preparation by which the crackers could be made edible was to



break them into scraps with a heavy hammer, soak them twelve hours in water, and then fry them in hot fat. It was hardly a Delmonico dish after all, but a taste was not sure death. Those biscuits were round, and of the size of a dinner-plate, and I speak the truth when I tell you that I have seen toy wagons made of them, wheels, axles and all, that would bear up a man. This antediluvian fodder fortunately lasted but a few months; and when we got new hard-tack, baked the same year, it was so soft and so sweet, we thought Old Abe had concluded to supply the army with soda-crackers. In one respect, it is upon my conscience to confess, the old rock was better eating than the new,—it was always *azoic*, and the new wasn't.

During the azoic period we got on more happily with the bread than with the beef. For not to speak of the doubts many of us had whether it was beef at all, or of the numerous theories of those in the company who allowed doubt upon this point to develop itself in their minds to an extreme, in one particular no one was vexed with the slightest skepticism, namely, that it was tough. We were not,

however, without resources. The fortune of war had sent us into a land, if not exactly flowing with milk and honey, at any rate overflowing [if you will pardon the metaphor] with youthful swine. Since England had recognized the secessionists as belligerents, why should not we? We did, and further, not being deeply read in international law, we inclined with such light as we had to adopt as sound the doctrine of "occasional contraband." Occasionally, therefore, we viewed pigs as contraband, and proceeded as loyal executives to confiscate. Fresh pork tasted better than the flesh General Scott had brought home from Mexico. What if we sometimes happened to select a loyal pig! We did it because we loved him. One of Colonel McClure's grunTERS fell a victim to our bayonets at Chambersburg on a certain fine morning, We were very sorry, but we were very hungry.

Once, when my company was marching from Williamsport to Martinsburg as convoy to one of General Patterson's wagon-trains, my comrade shot a fine fat porker suitable for a good supper to the entire gang of us. I was deputed to aid him in

dressing it. Deftly and all unbeknown to the officers, we loaded the carcass into one of the covered wagons, where, on the top of the barrels which formed the load, bending over, in spite of the jolting, as the ponderous vehicle rolled on, we performed our difficult task. At Martinsburg, being obliged to fall in and march to our camp with the rest of the company, we consigned the precious plunder to the company drummer, with orders to deliver it at the cook's quarters so soon as possible. He met a man who offered him money for it, our precious booty was sold, and we with it, having our labor for our pains.

Speaking of the cook's quarters, I am reminded of two immortal individuals who at different times presided there. One was a colored man whom we picked up in Maryland. He was bright and intelligent, though he could not read, and was, of course, distressingly ignorant. Of his ignorance, however, he was serenely unconscious, and launched into discussion upon any topic of family, church or state with as much confidence and gusto as Castlereagh or Metternich could have shown. He had been in Virginia, and had heard of New York and Pennsylvania.



These, with Maryland, he used to assert were all the states there were. The fellows assured him there was another, the state of Matrimony, which he emphatically denied, ascribing the mistake charitably to lack of information on their part. This colored cook of ours had a pretty wife, who occasionally visited the camp to see him. He professed and manifested for her the greatest affection; yet on being asked if he did not fear he would lose her when we advanced into Virginia, he replied: "'Deed I isn't 'feared o' nuf'm. De Lor' hain dun sot all de hansum gals in Ole Ma'lun. Dey's sum mo' down in Virginny sho's yo bawn, dey is. Ef yo gwine ter 'vance inter Virginny, Ole Ma'lun sartin fer ter lose dis yere niggah, wife er no wife."

Our other ever memorable cook was a soldier from our own ranks. I shall always regard him as absolutely the most remarkable personage in the entire history of man. It was not, I admit, his genius about the cuisine which entitled him to this eminence; it was certain rarer and finer qualities. Among these was his good nature. Tastes differ, even upon coffee. Two men one morning had dipped and

sipped from precisely the same boiler of this. One returned presently for some more. "Frisbee," said he, "that's superb; it's the best coffee we've had this year." "That's so," answered Frisbee, "I took er heap o' pains with that coffee; it oughter be good." Soon came the other,—"Frisbee, your coffee is infernal; it isn't fit for bilge-water this morning. Make any more such and I'll drown you in it." "Wal," said the imperturbable Frisbee, "that's so, 'tis mighty pore this time somehow, ye know ye can't allers git it jest right." That marvelous art of agreeing with everybody! Our Frisbee had it in perfection. He was a man of expedients, too. Often have I seen him, when the coffee in the boiler was running low before all had been supplied, seize a bucket, fill it with cold water from the tank and dash it in. If any one then complained of the thus diluted stuff, Frisbee was always ready with some plausible theory, as that he couldn't get the fire to go, or that he believed the coffee was in some way losing strength, or that the army contractors were a set of rascals anyhow.

Frisbee had not very many faults. The only ones

I can readily recall were swearing, gambling, lying, drinking, stealing and speaking evil of the orderly sergeant; but in these few, I feel constrained to testify, he was an adept and did not do things by halves. In drinking, however, we had one man who was more than a match for Frisbee. It was Bill Pilkington. He avowed that he did not care for the quality of the whiskey if it would only make the drunk come, and that he never allowed an opportunity for getting drunk to pass unimproved. I could take oath that during my acquaintance with him this was strictly true.

I turn now, with martial ardor, from quartermaster's and commissary's affairs to the more serious business of drill, discipline and war. I have remarked how hard we found it always to march in the same step. This was about the lightest of our difficulties. Those of us in the rear rank when the marching was to the front,—how prone we were to allow more than the regulation thirteen inches between ourselves and our file leaders! Each wanted to see his file leader's feet, for some reason or other, and they were not invisible to the naked eye, with

army shoes on. Facing was not the easiest thing to master, and not infrequently two soldiers, after a command "right face" or "left face," would be found hotly contending for the same spot to place their feet upon, in the spirit of "Stand, the ground's your own, my braves," an imbroglio often leading to blows, and to be decided only by the official count, "one, two, one, two," etc., down the line. But wheeling required still a higher order of genius than facing, intricate as the latter was. My captain, with that coolheadedness in terrible crises which has characterized all the great masters of the art of war from Ramses II. down to Lord Wolsey, whenever we were about to attempt a left wheel, used to caution us; "Now, boys, all look to the right and glance to the left." The few learned fellows among us who had read Hardee's Tactics had a theory that the captain was ignorant and should say, instead of "look to the right and *glance* to the left," "look to the right and *touch* to the left," and that obedience to the captain's form of the order was obviously impossible. The cross-eyed man in the company, generous-natured soul, stood up for the captain nobly. He said that

what those scholastic philosophers maintained might be true in theory but was false in practice, for he had proved that the order as given by the captain could be carried out with the utmost ease. But when a line officer, on one occasion, putting the regiment through the manual, undertook to bring us to a "ground arms" directly from a "shoulder arms," without any "order arms" between, the cross-eyed man was compelled to admit with tears that an error had been committed.

My company was at once blessed and cursed with Pat Lilly, who had served five years in the regular army, and knew the tactics as he knew his name. He was very tall, moreover, and graced the right of the front rank. I stood in that vicinity myself, and often have I heard the officer commanding the company on regimental drill lean over to Lilly, and in whisper ask: "Pat, Pat, what's the next order to give?"

But Lilly knew the wicked as well as the good ways of war. One night at Williamsport, when Jackson, then soon to become Stonewall Jackson, was just across the Potomac from us, and we there-



fore had orders to keep the strictest watch, Lilly heard the officer of the guard offering to bet a gallon of whiskey that no live man could run the guard. Lilly took that bet. He won it, too, in spite of the new and stricter orders which the officer hurried around to give, to shoot down any man passing the guard without the countersign. Lilly effected his object in this way. Getting as near the guard-line as he dared, at a point where two sentry-beats met, he lay down and pretended to be in dying agony with the colic. Having lain and moaned until apparently easier, the sentinels presently thought him asleep, when, as they were farthest apart, quicker than lightning he darted across the line, over the fence into the cornfield adjoining, and dropped flat upon the ground. Pop, pop, went the sentinels' muskets, but of course without harm to Lilly, who then got up and taking a circuit around, presented himself at the guard-quarters for his whiskey, which you may be sure he did not pour upon the ground.

The same Lilly, on another occasion, left his quarters in the night, stole horses from the wagon-camp, got a teamster to follow him as orderly, managed to

find out the countersign in some way, and rode the circuit of the entire brigade in the character of field officer of the day, turning out and inspecting guards, giving directions to colonels and making a fool of everybody.

We first heard the dreadful name of Jackson the very night we arrived in Hagerstown, Maryland, from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. It was past midnight, perhaps between two and three in the morning, when the long roll of the regimental drum corps startled the still air of our new camp. The rebels, it was said, led by Jackson, were crossing at Williamsport in force, and we, perhaps the only bulwark between them and the nation's life—we six miles away! It was a time to try men's souls and men's patience. What a scramble for cartridge-boxes, pistols and dirks,—for the pistol and bowie-knife era was still upon us! The officers bade us be calm, but they needed the advice not less imperatively than we. At last we had formed line, and the Colonel, on the ground probably that more battles are won by marching than by fighting, started us, raw levies, with six long miles and probably a battle before us, off on a

double quick. We ran a mile, puffing, sweating, straining our eyes to see that foe we so longed to annihilate. "Halt!" What for? Why, the line officers have held a council of war while trotting along upon their horses, and have concluded that if we are to fight it may be well to have our muskets loaded. No one had thought of it before. We had supposed that our brave Colonel, in whose skill as a tactician we had the most unhesitating confidence, intended on meeting Jackson, to charge with the bayonet? We conclude that he now alters his mind. At all events he commands to "load." But we have had no instructions in loading. Which end of the cartridge shall go downwards? About a third of the men, reasoning *apriori* that the bullet was the main thing, put it in first. A good number of those who did not do this, failed to tear the cartridge paper. Several put two or three cartridges in; some even more. It was the work of a week to empty those muskets. Having loaded and breathed, we began the race again. The sun rose. Was it the sun of Austerlitz? It was as bright and as hot. Men fell from the ranks. Some fainted physically, others in



heart. Some wanted to go home. Perhaps a tenth of the regiment reached Williamsport together; the rest came straggling in all the rest of the day. No enemy was there, the more's the pity for the enemy, for a brave dozen of cavalymen could have captured the whole of us. However, Jackson fell back toward Martinsburg, and we flattered ourselves with the hypothesis that he had heard of our advance and considered discretion the better part of valor.

While our camp was at Williamsport, we had some of the most ludicrous experiences imaginable. Our chief occupation was that to which I have already alluded, of convoying General Patterson's wagon trains to Martinsburg. The road lay through Virginia; Virginia had then seceded, and we had the idea that it was a part of our duty as Union soldiers to arrest for treason, as far as we could, all who had voted for secession. Patriotic to the core, we therefore made this our main business on each return trip from Martinsburg. Partly the numberless family feuds of the neighborhood and partly a desire to fool us, brought out plenty of professed informers. Every little way along the road we

would be met by parties assuring us that at such or such a house a secessionist lived. We used to break up into little squads to go and arrest such. In one house we were told that a lot of arms had been gathered for use on the Southern side, and that men had assembled there resolved to use and defend these arms, if need be, to the death. My company besought the lieutenant commanding us that day to let us storm that rebel castle. We threw out flankers and advanced. Approaching the house, we had to ford a deep stream, and supposed that our foe was reserving his fire till he could take us in mid-current. We charged through. We raced up the bank. We surrounded that house. Never did Wellington win a completer victory. We had our fortress in our power without firing or receiving a shot! Not to have been fired at at all rather non-plussed us. Had the enemy concluded we were resistless and that his only course was to surrender at discretion? We must force our way into the house and ascertain. A forlorn hope was called for, — men ready to take their lives in their hands for this great emergency.

“Theirs not to make reply ;  
Theirs not to reason why ;  
Theirs but to do and die,”

if necessary. They muster ; they rush for the door ; no shot ; a tottering old gray-beard of seventy-five opens ; he is the only man there. “Are there any arms in this house ?” “I reckon ther mout be.” “What and where are they ?” “Dunno zackly, mister ; wese gut an ole rewolver summer round yere, but durned ef I seener this six monts.” The old man told the truth. We searched the premises completely with his undoubtedly genuine aid, and found not the first sign of warlike stores save the lonely, empty revolver.

We had been victimized, but we must magnify our office as Union soldiers. “Did you vote for secession, old man ?” “’Deed did I,” was the prompt response. “Then you must go with us to camp,” said our officer ; and we had the effrontery to march that poor old victim ten miles with us to Williamsport, and put him in prison there. We noticed that as we marched, he kept step with us. Some of my most zealous compatriots inferred from this that he

had been drilling for service in Jackson's force, and were for blowing his brains out on the spot. He was saved by the insistence of the cooler ones, that the law should take its course. Should we, who had enlisted to enforce law, give the example of trampling on law? God forbid! The jail at Williamsport was full of these unhappy and outraged creatures for some weeks, till a provost-marshal who knew something, arrived from Washington and set them all at liberty. I saw the brave, injured old man whom I had helped arrest, climbing the Virginia bank of the Potomac, after his release, and with his clothes wet from having forded the stream, setting off on foot for his distant home. Often have I felt like a simpleton, but never more so than then.

While we lay at Williamsport, reports came every few nights of rebel plots to cross the river from Virginia and surprise us. One evening it was said that such an attempt was quite certain to be made. It happened to be my night on guard. It fell to my lot to be placed on post at midnight, at a point thought to be more exposed than any other about the camp,—a corner running up on to a bluff over-

looking the river. Just over the bluff, half a dozen rods away, was a little copse of trees, convenient, it was thought, as a point whence an enemy might make a sudden rush upon us. Why we did not occupy that thicket ourselves I never knew. That entire side of our encampment lay upon the ridge of which this bluff was part, the crest of the ridge toward the river and toward Virginia, being two or three rods outside the sentinels' beat. Every sentry along this exposed front had been given the strictest orders to fire upon any one advancing toward us that did not give the countersign or halt after a third challenge. Time wore on. Back and forth, forth and back, we lonely sentinels paced. Moonless and cloudy was the night, though the sky was visible over the crest of the knoll toward seceded Virginia. Back and forth, back and forth. It is one o'clock and no attack yet. But hush, hark; did ye not hear it? "Who comes there?" The challenge is uttered by the sentinel next me but one along the threatened border. No response. "Who comes there?" roared out the challenger a second time. Again, no response. The suspense is deathly. Doubtless Jack-



son has come back, crossed the river in the still and dark of the night, and is at this moment just beyond that hillock, with his rebel horde, about to make overwhelming onset on our devoted camp. "Who comes there?" the third time, and "bang" spoke the old Springfield musket, with voice enough to waken the dead. Thereat, O what a trampling of feet, rushing and snorting in the copsewood in front of me—noise as of steeds and mustering squadrons, quickly forming in the ranks of war! My hair stood on end. But, dauntless as Regulus, I cocked my piece and faced the foe, "determined," as the novelists put it, "if fall I must, not to fall alone." But I was not called upon on that occasion to sell my life either dearly or cheaply. The scampering was in the other direction. A few mules had innocently gone to sleep in that brush, and had been scared by the discharge of the musket. But what had the fellow shot at? Let us see. "Corporal of the guard No. 11." The cry was passed along, and presently appeared, not indeed the corporal but the officer of the day. Not wishing to imitate Napoleon's fatal blunder at Borodino, of holding back his reserves

in a crucial exigency, he had brought both reliefs that were off duty. They moved at a double quick, with fixed bayonets and martial bearing, to help repel the dreaded invasion of our camp. The man who had fired told the officer he had heard steps and breathing from the direction of the river, and had seen a head rise above the ridge against the sky, and then sink and rise and sink again, as if some wily and determined scout were making a cautious reconnaissance of the position. He added, with the accuracy of one testifying at a coroner's inquest, that when he fired he heard something drop, and that he believed they would find a dead rebel out there. They searched. Not a dead rebel but a dead cow was found, which the commanding officer was good enough to pay thirty dollars for next morning. From mules and cows our unparalleled vigilance and valor had delivered us. There was not an armed rebel nearer than Winchester, forty miles away.

It used to interest me to notice what special agony it cost many men to understand and execute orders which demanded memory of any precise form of speech. Charley Schmidt was a faithful soldier

in my company, a believer in German beer and in German military ability, profoundly impressed "dot if Plenker [Blenker] or Zeekle [Sigel] vair only de gommander of de vorzis, mein Gott, de reppils voot shoost kit oop and kit out of de vay, you het petter peleef." Charley and I happened to be on guard together the night when the field grand rounds of the brigade we had joined at Darnestown made their first regular and formal circuit. Heretofore we had not been brigaded or divisioned, but had been a host in ourselves. The sergeant came along beforehand and gave each of us the most explicit instructions how to challenge. He said: "Now, Charley, be sure to get it right. Don't make any mistake. When you hear them coming about ten rods off, you want to shout 'Who comes there?' As soon as the answer is heard, 'Field grand rounds,' you must cry, 'Halt, grand rounds; advance sergeant with the countersign.'" All right, Charley will try to remember. But Charley walks on pebbles. He repeats it and repeats it with fear and trembling, lest he should make an error and the war be a failure. Hark! the august cavalcade approaches. We



can hear the clanking of hoofs and the rattle of sabres. One after another challenges, the cortège halts, the password is given, on they press to the next sentinel. Now it is Charley's turn, but the words stick in his throat, which has not been lubricated with lager beer for some hours. Summoning all his moral energy he at length screeches out: "Who isht dair?" "Field grand rounds," they answer back. "Halt de krant rounts," commands Charley,— "atvance, zarchent, mit de — mit de — mit de — mit de — mit de *gorporal-sign*." The officer making the rounds did not reproach Charley for his bungling, but Charley reproached himself, and would not be comforted till the sutler's tent was opened at six in the morning and he could refresh himself once more with the beverage he loved.

I often amused myself then and later when on guard, by listening to the different national brogues that made themselves heard in the challenges as the grand rounds passed from sentinel to sentinel. There was the flat, blunt, homely Yankee challenge, uttered by the farmer boy of old Connecticut: "*Who kums thar?*" There was also the Irish: "*Heu cooms theyer?*" and the German: "*Who koomsh dair?*"

I must conclude ; but before doing so, or rather, in doing so, I am anxious to give you a passing acquaintance with a few of my first year war comrades whom I have not yet mentioned. It is no reproach to Charlie Schmidt, Frisbee and Bill Pilkington to say that they did not alone compose that galaxy of fixed stars that made up the brilliant company in which it was my privilege to shine in the character of [pardon the egotism] a lamp. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to my friend, Private James Jacoby, the peer, if such exists on earth, of that other friend of mine already familiar to you, Frisbee the cook, in the matter of good nature, serenity of temper, facility and felicity in taking things as they come. Jacoby is from the Fatherland, but has been in America so many years that you would hardly suspect his nationality from his speech. Like his illustrious fellow-countryman, Charley Schmidt, however, he loves beverage, but rarely takes too much and is never rendered savage or brutal by indulgence. He never grumbles, but eats, sleeps, drills, stands guard, and is paid off, without a word of complaint ; has learned like the

apostle, in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content. Many a time have I heard Jacoby, as he lay down to sleep on the ground at night after a good square meal, and drew his blanket over him, say : "O aint I glad I came to war !" And many a time, when some churlish Englishman in the company was grumbling at everything and cursing everybody from Abe Lincoln down to the corporal that stood by, would Jim Jacoby turn to him and say : "Man, you no business to listed, you'd grumble if you was goin' to be hung."

Let me present you next to Private Alexander Wilson. For short, we call him Alek. His father and mother were Irish and he is Irish too. This explains why Alek is a wit. He can be tender, also, as I know from having had charge of his courting correspondence for several months. The fact is, my company in general was mightier in military than in literary attainments ; and as in the kingdom of the blind the near-sighted man is king, so among us, he who could read and write was pronounced to possess a liberal education. "My parents were poor but respectable," and I had seen the inside of a

school-house more days than most of the fellows with whom I stood shoulder to shoulder in defending the sacred cause of liberty. So I became private secretary to several, of whom Alek Wilson was one. It is not, however, so much on his tenderness as on his wit that I would dwell at present. Alek, one evening, had been, to state it mildly, under the influence of stimulating liquids, and the colonel had seen fit to tie him up over night, by the wrists, with several other patriots in the same happy frame of mind. About eight in the morning, the colonel, a new-comer, by the way, a West Pointer, with whom it was somehow a pet notion that discipline must be maintained, went forth to labor with these miserable offenders. Seizing the first one by the throat, he said: "You rascal, were you drunk last night?" "No, sor," was the reply. "You lie," said the colonel; "Officer of the guard, keep this man here till noon." Grasping the next man in the same manner, he demanded: "You scoundrel, were you drunk last night?" "I was, sor," the fellow said. "Will you get drunk again?" "No, sor." "You lie,—officer of the guard, keep this man here till ten o'clock."

The rigid disciplinarian came thirdly to Alek Wilson. "Wilson, you scamp, were you drunk last night?" "Shure I was, sor." "Will you get drunk again?" "Begorra I would, sor, if I got a good chance." "Honest man,—officer of the guard, take Wilson down and send him to his quarters; he tells the truth."

Lastly, permit me to make you acquainted with their honors, Privates Cornelius Dacy and Jeremiah Horan, who dwell in my memory—and they will dwell there perpetually—together. Horan can read and is a logician; a philosopher, in fact. He has deep views about politics and has constituted himself a standing committee on the conduct of the war. He is a democrat. If a fine deed or idea is ascribed to any prominent republican, he blasts its force by the innuendo, "yes, but what are his antecedents?" When not on duty, Horan is on the other duty of instructing his messmates what a failure Lincoln is as a president, and how badly every Union campaign has been managed. It is his hobby that the Union troops are no match for the rebels anyway. Dacy, on the other hand, can not read, does not profess



politics, is not up on the conduct of the war at large, but patriotic to the backbone, and accounting it damnable heresy to hint that soldiers ever lived who were superior to himself and his glorious companions in the service of the United States.

One day Dacy falls into argument with Horan on this point. Dacy remembers, a trifle mixedly, what he has heard about the two battles, Bull Run and Ball's Bluff [the only considerable engagements in the East up to the time of which I speak], and concludes to attack his antagonist by the historical method. Collecting his memories of the retreat across the Potomac from the last named battle, he says: "Fair did iver dthose ribbils schwim six miles under warther wid their knapsacks upon their backs and their mooskets in their hands?" Dacy believes this to be an unanswerable argument, a regular clincher. But Jeremiah Horan isn't a disputant to be pushed to the wall so readily. "You blockhead, you," he rejoins, "no soldiers ever did that. It's nonsense. The Union men never did that. Where did Union soldiers ever do such a thing as that?" Dacy's face reddened with patriotic



blood. "Where should it be?" he roars, the assurance of forensic victory lighting up every feature of his classic face, "where should it be? Shure where should it be but at the battle of Ball's and Bulls's Bluff."















Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: May 2010

**Preservation Technologies**

**A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION**

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 763 153 2

